

It's Cherry Blossom Time...on Stamps

On March 24, 2012, in Washington, D.C., the USPS will issue a Cherry Blossom Centennial Forever se-tenant pair of stamps (priced at 45 cents each) in two designs in a pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) pane of 20 stamps. The issue commemorates the friendship between America and Japan and marks the centennial of the gift of 3,020 cherry trees from Japan to Washington D.C. 100 years ago.

In the unusual, wide-angle, design, two stamps form the left and right halves of a single, panoramic view of cherry trees blooming around the Tidal Basin in the nation's capital. In the stamp on the left, blossoming trees arch over two girls dressed in bright kimonos and a family on a stroll. The Washington Monument rises in the background. In the stamp on the right, the Jefferson Memorial is the backdrop for other tourists taking in the sights under canopies of pink blooms.

On March 27, 1912, in a modest ceremony at the Tidal Basin, First Lady Helen Herron Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two trees. Since then, Washington's cherry blossoms have remained an ever-renewing source of pleasure and pride. In 1927, local citizens held the first celebration of these stunning trees, and today the National Cherry Blossom Festival typically draws more than a million visitors.

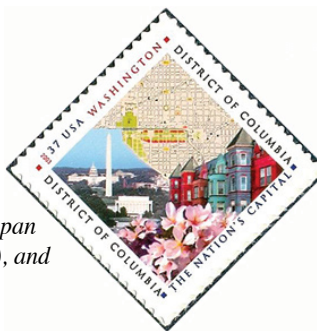


Each spring, the festival that honors the blossoming of the cherry trees includes a parade and a host of concerts, exhibitions, and events that echo the spirit of Japan's gift of friendship. Because these spectacular trees flower so briefly, the Japanese often see them as poignant symbols of transience—making every blossom an invitation to celebrate being alive.

Designed by Art Director Phil Jordan, the stamps feature a colorful illustration by Paul Rogers. The stamps were printed by Ashton Potter (USA) Ltd. using an offset process with "USPS" microprinting as added security against counterfeiting. A total of 100 million stamps will be issued.

Plate Numbers in the four corners of the pane consist of the letter "P" to identify Ashton Potter as the printer followed by five single digits, one for each print color: black, cyan, magenta, yellow and PMS 293 (a shade of blue).

Cherry blossoms and other blossoms are a popular worldwide topic. We picture here a few examples, some of which you might even want to place on your First Day Covers. There are plenty more, so do a little searching and let your imagination run wild.



Left to right, U.S. Sc. 1158 (U.S.-Japan Treaty, Sc. 1318 (Beautify America), and Sc. 3813 (D.C.)



Romania 2011 Peach blossom and Switzerland 1962 Apple blossom



Japan Sc. 725 definitive



Japan "Mihon" Z277, renowned ancient Cherry tree in bloom



Guinea 2011 Cherry Blossoms set, unlisted in Scott



Ajman Cherry Blossoms souvenir sheet, unlisted in Scott